

**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN BOARD OF REGENTS
INSTRUCTIONAL & RESEARCH ACADEMIC STAFF**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The UW System Board of Regents' *Study of the University of Wisconsin System in the 21st Century* recommended an examination of “the role of instructional and research academic staff within the UW System with the intention of improving their status, roles, rights and responsibilities.” To accomplish this examination, a committee made up of academic staff and faculty conducted a survey of UW System institutions, and reviewed personnel policies and relevant literature. In 1998, the Board of Regents accepted a report from this committee entitled *Teaching Academic Staff in the UW System (Teaching Academic Staff Study)*.

As significant numbers of faculty and academic staff retire in the next several years, the UW System will be faced with rebuilding its instructional core. Acknowledging that the instructional core will continue to consist of a combination of tenure-track faculty as well as non-tenure-track instructional and research staff, it is imperative that institutions fill vacant positions with the best possible candidates while remaining flexible and responsive to change. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each of our institutions and the UW System Administration to support our human resources in a manner reflective of the considerable and important contributions they make. Every effort should be made to help ensure that faculty and academic staff will continue to make significant contributions to the success and vitality of the UW System, while they work in environments that are professionally rewarding. This is particularly important for the growing number people who are hired as instructional and research academic staff.

REGENT ACTION

This item is for information only. No action is requested.

BACKGROUND

Nationally, 43 percent of all instructional staff were part-time employees according to the National Center for Education Statistics study published in April 2001 (NCES - NSOPF:99). Among public comprehensive institutions, 36.8 percent of instructional staff were part-time. At public research universities, nearly 21 percent were part-time. Forty-nine percent of instructional staff at public two-year colleges were part-time. The Chronicle of Higher Education (May 4, 2001) reported that earlier studies showed that roughly the same proportion, nearly 42 percent, of instructional staff members were part time in 1992 – up from 33 percent in 1987. The vast majority of these part-time instructional staff – approximately 95 percent – do not have tenure or

have tenure-track appointments. They typically hold limited term positions or are hired on a semester-to-semester basis.

In the UW System, the percentage of non-tenure instructional staff has increased as well. Non-tenure instructors are categorized as academic staff, a group of employees separate from the faculty with its own set of personnel policies and procedures. The proportion of instructional academic staff (IAS) in the UW System has increased from an average of 23.5 percent of all instructional staff (head count (HC), tenure / tenure-track faculty and IAS combined) in 1987, to 32.7 percent in 1997, and declined slightly to 32.3 percent in 2000 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Changes in proportion of faculty and instructional academic staff by headcount

	Faculty HC	as % of all instruction	IAS*	as % of all instruction	Total all instruction
1987	7319	76.5%	2249	23.5%	9568
1997	6566	67.3%	3192	32.7%	9758
2000	6172	67.7%	2946	32.3%	9118

* IAS excludes clinical, CHS, visiting, emeritus, L/I, and instrument innovators

The *Teaching Academic Staff Study* acknowledged the complexity of staffing decisions as they relate to programmatic needs, fluctuating demands, availability of qualified faculty, and budget constraints. In this context, institutions were encouraged to establish plans to utilize fully the talents of the instructional and research academic staff, enhancing the learning environment for students across the UW System. The report revealed that:

- Institutions varied widely in the extent of their use of instructional and research academic staff (IRAS), the ways in which IRAS were deployed at the institution, and the types of appointments and attendant job security they were afforded.
- Departments within the institutions varied in their approaches to including IRAS in governance and other activities of the academic community, and to evaluating their work.
- IRAS personnel policies and working conditions were not clearly articulated.
- Issues related to IRAS could be addressed most effectively at the institutional level, with the UW System Administration best suited to provide a legal framework, guidance and examples of best practices.

The report put forward several recommendations designed to improve the UW System's instructional environment for students. Initiatives that focused on improving the integration of IRAS into institutional life and on modifying personnel policies were proposed at both the individual institution level and systemwide level.

DISCUSSION

Several initiatives have been supported to help ensure that IRAS will continue to make significant contributions to the success and vitality of the UW System, while they work in environments that are professionally rewarding (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Timeline of IRAS initiatives

1998	1999	2000	2001
<i>Teaching Academic Staff Study</i>	Systemwide IRAS Forum	Personnel Officers' Meeting	Regent Staffing Principles
			IRAS Working Group Report

In April 1999, teams from each of the 15 UW institutions attended a daylong forum that focused on IRAS issues. Teams discussed ways to integrate IRAS into institutional life and began developing plans to implement improvements. Additionally, academic personnel officers from each of the institutions participated in a focus group meeting in March 2000 and shared information about campus policy, process and practice as they relate to IRAS titling, hiring, and job security.

At its March 2000 meeting, the Board approved a series of staffing principles. The principles were adopted to guide UW institutions over the next decade in rebuilding the instructional core as current faculty and academic staff retire. The principles included a call for titles for non-tenure instructional and research staff to be revised to reflect national titling trends, and for institutions to develop policies and practices to better integrate non-tenure instructional and research staff into departments and institutions.

The UW System IRAS Working Group was convened in Fall 2000 to investigate and recommend titling options for IRAS and to propose initiatives to facilitate the integration of IRAS into institutional life. The working group was comprised of representatives from each of the UW Institutions including members of the academic staff, faculty, institutional administration, and UW System Administration. The working group submitted its final report in March 2001 (see Appendix A).

The recommendations that emerged from the efforts of the IRAS Working Group were guided by the underlying presumption that full-time, permanent instructional needs should be filled through faculty appointments in accord with the UW System Unclassified Personnel Guidelines. For positions that do not require work in all three areas of faculty responsibility (teaching, research and service) the working group acknowledged that academic staff appointments are appropriate, and that all members of the academic staff are an important and integral part of the UW System and its institutions.

The IRAS Working Group made several recommendations specific to its charge. It suggested several initiatives and actions for both the UW System Administration and individual UW institutions to enhance the integration of IRAS into institutional life. The recommendations were intended to increase the opportunities IRAS have to participate in programs, activities and

governance. They were envisioned as ways to remove barriers to integration and not intended as additional or new job responsibilities and/or expectations. Recommendations included enhancing orientation for IRAS, providing modules of instructional and research support, improving opportunities for professional development, and increasing IRAS involvement in institutional and departmental governance. In addition, two new titling series were proposed to better reflect the responsibilities, credentials and work expectations of career IRAS. The working group proposed an Instructional Professor and a Research Professor series of titles (see Appendix A for IRAS Working Group Report).

FEEDBACK FROM UW INSTITUTIONS

In considering the recommendations, the interim senior vice president for academic affairs distributed the report to each institution and requested comment. He asked for a single institutional response from each institution and strongly encourage that the response take into account input from stakeholder groups such as faculty, administration, and academic staff, particularly instructional and research.

Institutions were very supportive of the recommendations to enhance the integration of IRAS into institutional life. Both faculty and academic staff indicated implementation of the recommendations would likely lead to more full assimilation of IRAS into campus life. Many institutions reported that many of the initiatives recommended were already being implemented. While supportive, many institutions expressed concern over the resources that may be required to fully implement all of the recommendations.

Institutions were generally not supportive of the new titling series – *instructional professor* and *research professor* – as the IRAS Working Group proposed. Furthermore, faculty and academic staff at the institutions were divided in their support. Faculty indicated that the proposed titles would blur the distinction between the roles of faculty and academic staff, they would add unnecessary complexity to existing salary and promotion systems, and the proposed titles would cause confusion among external groups such as legislators, the public and students. Academic staff generally supported the titles, but some expressed concern that adopting the proposed new titles might give the appearance that issues related to job security, recognition and salaries were being avoided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Integration into Institutional Life. After consultation with the UW System executive committee, vice chancellors, faculty representatives, academic staff representatives and UWSA human resources staff; interim senior vice president for academic affairs accepted the recommendations made by the IRAS working group to enhance the integration of IRAS into institutional life. Each institution will be asked to implement the integration recommendations and report on the progress of their initiatives to UW System Administration Office of Academic Affairs by June 30, 2002.

Personnel Policy and Practice. As a result of the IRAS Working Group's investigations and discussions, the group found evidence that significant variability exists within institutions

and their utilization of the current IRAS titles, appointment length and continuity status. UW System Administration and UW Institutions will be asked to engage in a concerted effort to ensure that Unclassified Personnel Guidelines are applied consistently. In particular, UPG 3.05, sections 1-4 are emphasized. This may include providing on-going education to personnel directors, deans, department chairs and supervisors regarding how to apply unclassified titles.

Revising IRAS Titles to Reflect National Trends. The IRAS working group analyzed the non-tenure instructional staff titles used by a number of comparable institutions and university systems from across the country. There was no clear national consensus or definitive trend on titles. The IRAS working group offered specific recommendations to create systemwide *instructional professor* and *research professor* titles similar to those adopted by some of the comparable institutions investigated. It was evident from the feedback provided by each institution that divergent perspectives were held on the proposed titles. Because of these diverging views, consensus on the professorial titles as recommended was not possible to achieve.

After consulting with members of the UW System executive committee, chancellors, vice chancellors, faculty representatives, academic staff representatives and UWSA human resources staff; the recommendations to develop systemwide *instructional professor* and *research professor* titles as proposed have not been accepted. However, the interim senior vice president for academic affairs reminds institutions that existing personnel policy permits the establishment of informal working titles for IRAS. This flexibility is permitted in UPG 1 that states:

As a reflection of differences in position responsibilities, organizational structures and institutions, formal unclassified titles are defined in general terms (UPG 1, Attachment 1). Therefore, institutions may find it useful or necessary to establish informal working titles to describe positions. A structure of informal working titles, and the policies, procedures and practices for its administration may be established at the discretion of the institution.